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E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/26/2016
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [MOPS](#) [MEPN](#) [KPAL](#) [EG](#) [IS](#)
SUBJECT: ATTACK ON KEREM SHALOM CROSSING: EGYPTIAN
REACTIONS

REF: WELCH/JONES/RICCARDONE 06/25/2006 TELCOM

Classified by Ambassador Francis Ricciardone for reasons 1.4
(b) and (d).

¶1. (C) On June 25, the Ambassador discussed the recent attack on Israeli forces at the Kerem Shalom crossing with Defense Minister Tantawi, Foreign Minister Aboul Gheit, and EGIS Deputy Gohar (in Minister Soliman's absence). All three agencies were obviously following events closely and they have compared reports with us throughout the day. They indicated that their respective channels with the Israelis were working, and that Egypt was deeply concerned both about potential Israeli reactions and about Hamas' role in the attack. In particular, MOD worried that renewed violence in Gaza could impel panicked attempts at another mass breach of the Rafah border, as last occurred in January.

¶2. (C) By noon, we received confirmation that all of the border crossings between Egypt, Israel, and Gaza had been closed. According to the MFO, a group of Israeli soldiers had been scheduled to cross at Kerem Shalom to go to MFO's North Camp for training but were not permitted to do so. They unsuccessfully tried to cross into Egypt at another border point further south. It is not clear if they were stopped by the Israelis or the Egyptians.

¶3. (C) Per ref telcom, Ambassador urged Hossam Gohar, deputy chief of EGIS for international affairs, to use GOE influence with the Palestinians to reduce tensions and restore peace. Specifically, he also requested that the GOE prevent Palestinian Foreign Minister Zahar from leaving Gaza and to offer all possible assistance to Israel in its search for the missing soldier.

¶4. (C) Previously, the Egyptians had positioned firetrucks on the border that could be used to aim high-powered waterhoses at individuals trying to cross from Gaza into Egypt. According to LAWIO's director Major General Nagy M. Kamal, Egypt recently staged additional firetrucks in anticipation of future unrest.

¶5. (U) Egyptian television's Gaza correspondent Walid Abdel Rahman reported that Israeli forces with heavy machine-guns and artillery are in Rafah and that MFO personnel were unable to approach the area. Rahman said that a wide-scale Israeli military operation is expected. Rahman quoted Palestinian sources as saying that the attack was in response to Israel's military escalation and the recent assassination of resistance leaders. He said that according to Israeli sources, four Palestinian attackers were killed.
RICCIARDONE